



The Influence of the Number of Presented Symptoms in Product-Claim Direct-to-Consumer Advertising on Behavioral Intentions

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Purpose

In order to improve the effectiveness of product-claim Direct-to-Consumer Advertising (DTCA), the current research examines the effect of a presentational element – the number of treatable symptoms for the advertised medical condition featured in the ad – on consumers’ intentions to seek treatment.

Methodology

Ninety-five participants recruited at a mall in the northeastern US provided data on behavioral and attitudinal intentions regarding a product-claim print DTCA for an antidepressant.

Findings

Featuring a high (vs. low) number of symptoms improved the effectiveness of the product-claim DTCA. Seeing more symptoms led to heightened perceptions of informativeness, lower persuasive intent, and higher intentions to discuss the advertised ailment and the advertised drug with the doctor. Perceptions of disease prevalence mediated this influence. The perceived impact of each symptom featured in the DTCA was controlled across experimental conditions.

Research Implications

This research contributes to the healthcare marketing literature by demonstrating how managing a presentational element in DTCA influences consumers’ meta-cognitive processing of the health information and consequently their intentions to engage in health-related behaviors.

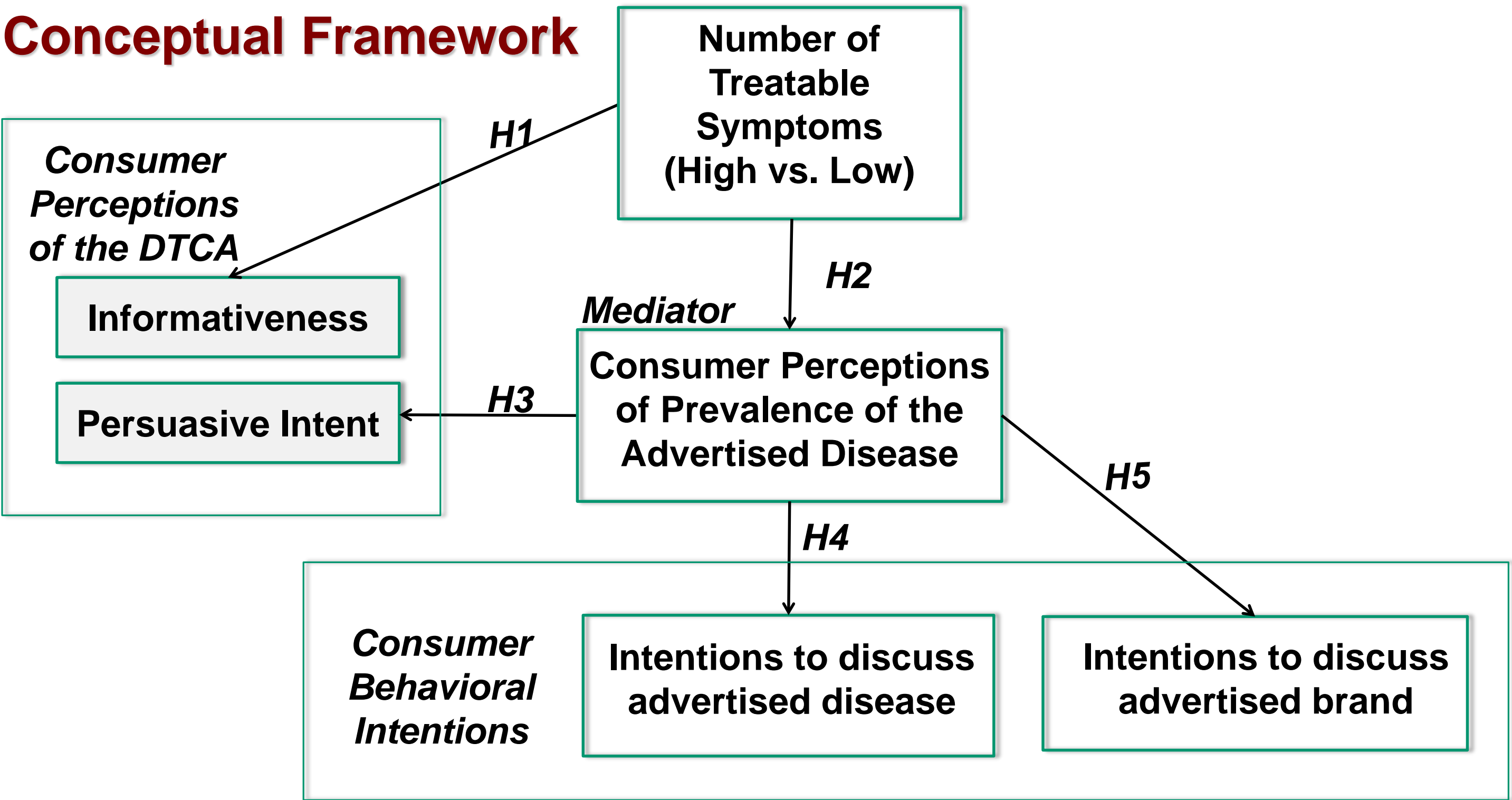
Practical Implications

Within the regulatory boundaries, pharmaceutical marketers may wish to increase the number of treatable symptoms to feature in their product-claim DTCA in order to improve the effectiveness. Originality/value: This research builds on the extant literature of examining consumer perceptions of DTCA, and suggests a practical and metacognitive means to improve consumer perceptions to ultimately enhance DTCA effectiveness.

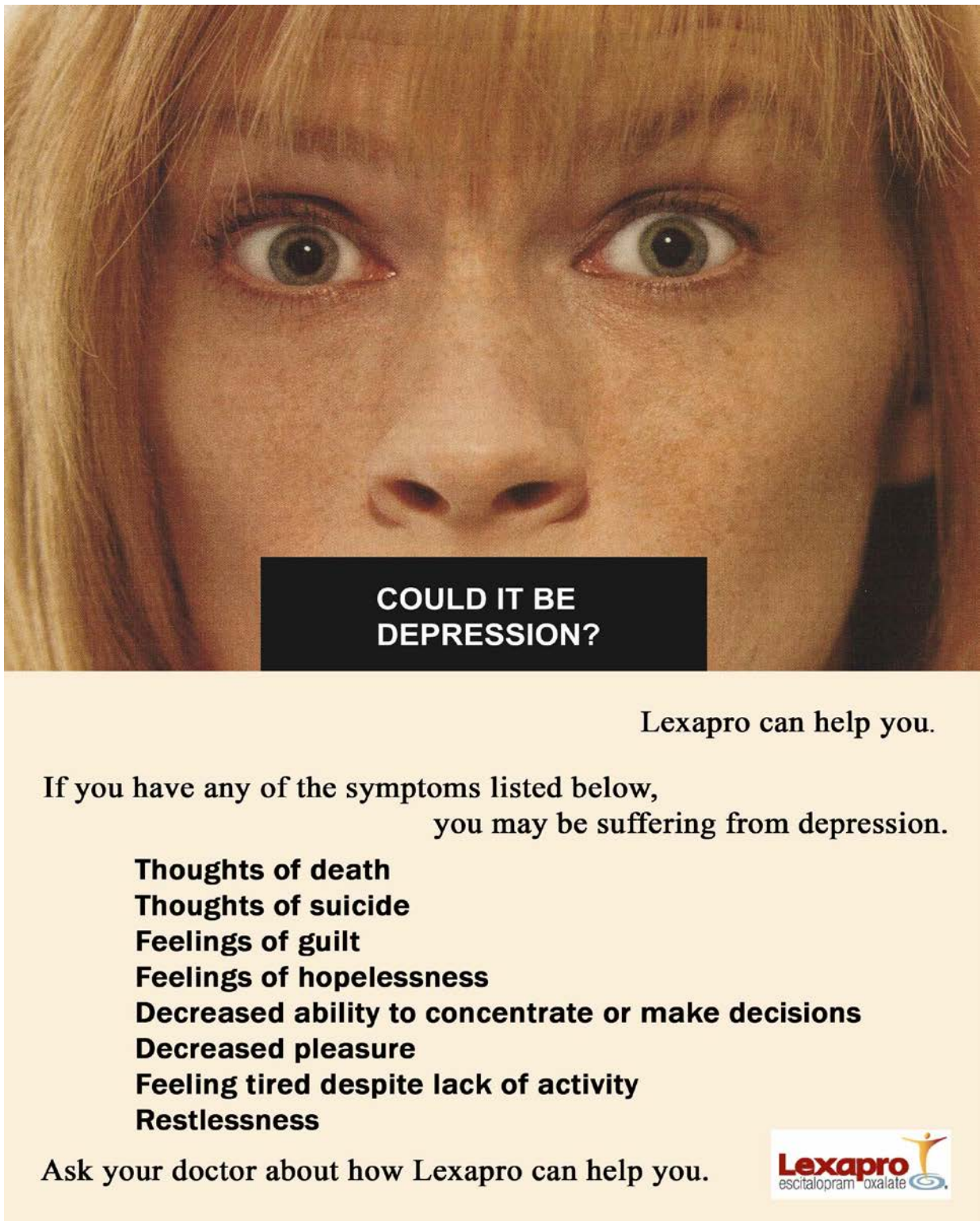
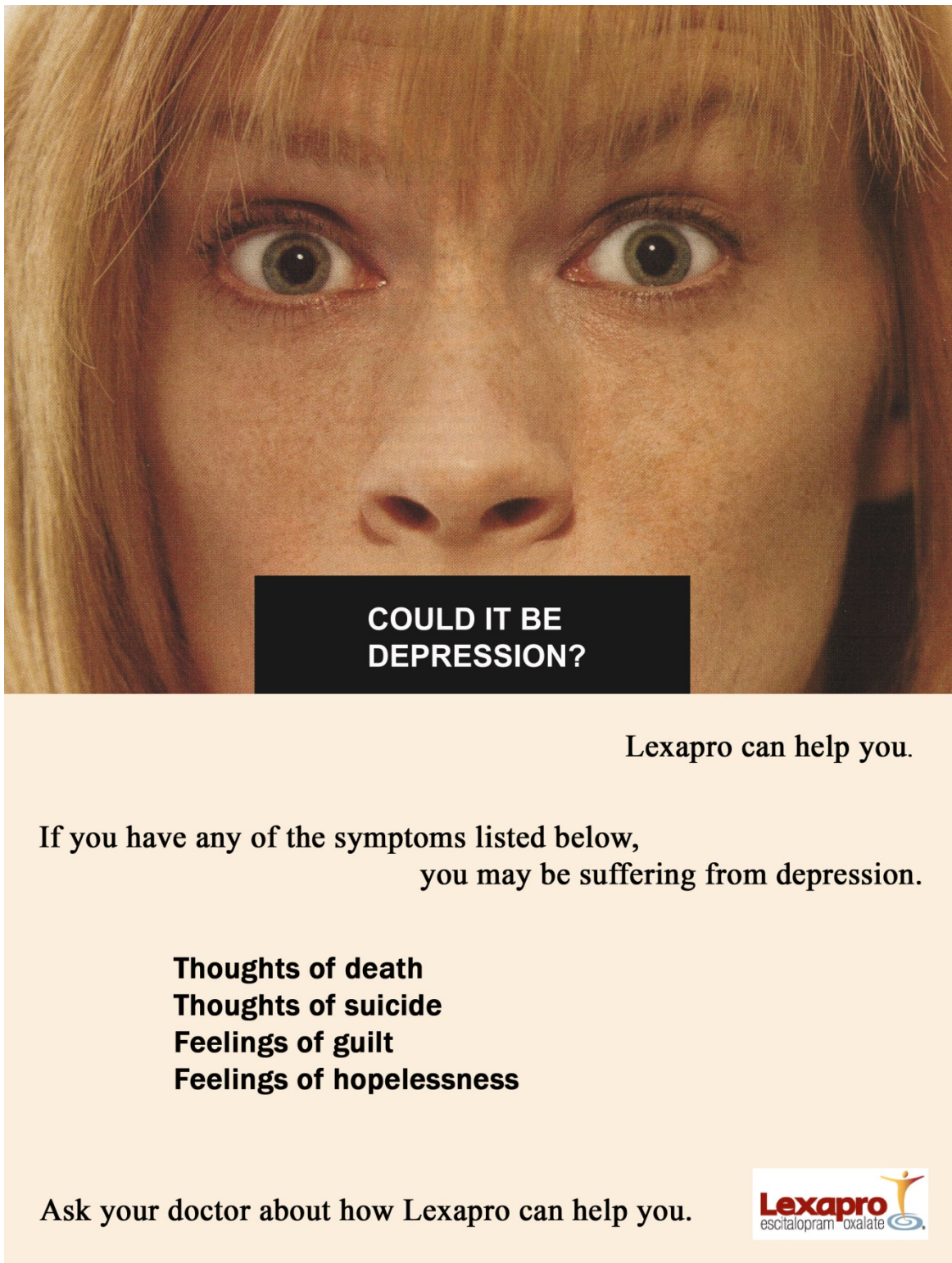
FDA Regulations on Product Claim DTCA

FDA regulations state that product claim ads must include[1]:	Decisions under control of advertisers in execution
▪ At least one FDA-approved use for the drug	▪ Number of treatable symptoms
▪ The most significant risk(s) of the drug	▪ Selection of treatable symptoms
	▪ Selection and interpretation of the ‘most significant’ risks
	▪ Number of risk(s) to be presented

Conceptual Framework



Experiment Stimuli (Low vs. High number of Symptoms)



Select Results of Statistical Analyses

Number of Featured Symptoms	Consumer Perceptions			Behavioral Intent	
	(H1)	H2	(H3)	(H4)	H5)
	Informativeness	Prevalence	Persuasive Intent	Discuss Disease	Discuss Drug
Low	3.93	6.58	5.08	1.70	.95
High	5.18	7.60	4.00	2.95	1.58
F	6.66	8.29	4.64	12.79	8.17
p	.0114	.0049	.0339	.0006	.0053